

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO) along with Congressman Diane Black and Congressman Randy Forbes, sent a letter signed by 66 Members of Congress urging Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to investigate a pattern of hostility towards faith in the United States Air Force. The letter calls on Secretary Panetta to issue clear Department of Defense policy guidance, consistent with our Constitution, to preserve the place of religious expression in the military at large.

From removing Latin references to God, to barring commanders from notifying airmen of Chaplain Corps programs, members of Congress are concerned about the pattern that is emerging from the Air Force. Congressman Akin stated: "When our sons and daughters join the military, they are not signing away their First Amendment right to religious liberty. Unfortunately, it seems that some parts of the military are intent on prohibiting religious expression rather than protecting it. I hope that the Secretary of Defense will respond to this strong letter from over sixty Members of Congress by issuing clear protections for the religious liberty of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines."

Congressman Black emphasized her concern, providing an example of a particularly troubling incident: "I am outraged that the religious liberties of those serving our nation are being encroached upon. The current policy changes within the Air Force are unprecedented and without merit. For instance, suspending the elective ethics briefing due to the mere reference of Bible verses is unacceptable. I hope that Secretary Panetta agrees and will issue clear policy guidance that protects religious expression in the military."

The Air Force has over the last year taken extraordinary steps in removing religious symbols and references from the service. Congressman Forbes stated: "The Air Force has repeatedly capitulated to demands from groups that seek to remove all traces of faith from the military and the public square. When viewed individually, any of these actions is concerning. But taken together, they highlight an alarming pattern in the Air Force that we do not see in the other branches of the military. Those who sacrifice so much for our nation must be assured that they need not leave their faith at home when they volunteer to serve."

It is vital that a consistent policy in regards to religious liberties is issued by the Department of Defense. Religious liberties should be guarded and protected in all of our Armed Forces.

A copy of the letter is available here: [USAF religious freedom letter 06-19-2012.pdf](#) .

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